

Bush River Community Council

March 21, 2011 Meeting Minutes

The first meeting of the Bush River Community Council (BRCC) was called to order by the Chairman, John Paff, at 6:32 p.m. in the Media Room, Church Creek Elementary School on March 21, 2011. County Councilwoman Mary Ann Lisanti and Patricia Gonzales from the County Executive Staff were present. Council members in attendance were Larry Carmichael, Glenn Dudderar, Harry Webster and Mary Starks. Kathleen Leary was absent due to illness. Twenty-one members of the Bush River community attended. The Chairman led all present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States.

First order of business was designation of Larry Carmichael as Vice Chairman and Mary Starks as Secretary for the BRCC. The Chairman announced that monthly meetings of the BRCC would be held on the third Monday of each month at this location except for July and August when schools are out for summer recess.

Councilwoman Lisanti asked for introductions and then welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the council. She discussed the history and establishment of the BRCC and her desire to facilitate effective two-way communication among residents, herself and the office of the County Executive. Examples of this include active participation in the update of the Land Use Plan, Baltimore Gas and Electric Company updates of infrastructure in Harford County, and State Department of Transportation designation of Route 40 as a non-carbon footprint.

Two representatives from the Harford County Sheriff's Department gave a presentation on Crime Prevention and Abatement in the county as a whole and Bush River specifically. And provided a handout with statistics for our area. They gave several suggestions to the community:

Lock car doors. Many car thefts are the result of unlocked doors and open garage doors.

Re program GPS so it does not show a home address as the starting point. Thieves use this information to target homes as well. Do not leave GPS, garage door openers or Ipods in view. Call 911 if the commission of a crime is suspected – especially around development sites as the value of copper has increased and it is being targeted by criminals in many areas of the county. Try to get a description of vehicles or clothing worn by persons behaving in a suspicious manner.

When asked the status of gang-related crime in Harford County, they responded that it has been stabilized by the Harford County task force at this time: currently, forty-six gang members have been arrested and are in jail awaiting trial. They recommend that if you see graffiti, call 911 immediately. They will arrive and record the graffiti and then you or your property manager should remove it as quickly as possible. They indicated that Southern Precinct Captain Christopher Swain will be our contact until a representative is assigned to the BRCC.

Mr. Pete Gutwald from the Harford County Planning and Zoning Office gave a presentation on the process and time line of the Update of the Land Use Plan focusing on 4 areas: Land use, Economic Prosperity, Public Facilities, Services and Safety, and Sustainability. The time line began with the February Kick Off public meeting, the April 7 public workshop, Plan development spring through summer, a draft plan and public round tables in the fall, County Council Public Hearings in the winter 2011/2012 and adoption of the plan by winter 2012. He emphasized the efficacy of using the web site especially designed to provide input by county residents. Each person must register and can then put ideas or agree or disagree with ideas or concerns already posed on the sites. All input will be reviewed

by appropriate offices.

Some specific issues were raised by attendees regarding zoning. A number of attendees voiced concerns about dilapidated and abandoned buildings along the Route 40 corridor. While the first amendment rights must be considered, the number of adult bookstores along this stretch of Rte 40 seems excessive. Several actions are being taken to encourage business or property owners to clean up Route 40: Renaming the Route 40 Redevelopment Corridor to the Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor; establishing Enterprise Zones with incentives to establish legitimate businesses, and changing set-backs to reduce businesses where there is insufficient property backing to the B&O railroad tracks. A discussion of changes to the Water Shed Plan followed regarding funding sources, Storm Water Retrofits, and education on the sources of harmful chemicals entering the streams and tributaries. Further discussions were renewable energy, recycling and solid waste-to energy technology.

Patricia Gonzales, representing the Office of the County Executive, thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and gave her phone number, 410-638-INFO, for questions or problems. She recommended using the Innovations that Work web site and invited attendees to serve on the council, offering applications to those who may be interested.

Mr. Bob Frisch, newly elected member of the Harford County School Board briefed on the recent elementary school redistricting plan and emphasized how important citizen input was to the process and how it changed the outcome significantly. He offered to participate with the council on public education issues and concerns in the Bush River community.

The Chairman called for ideas, concerns for future action plans. He began with the idea of the BRCC adopting parks along the water front – several were described and will be discussed at future meetings. The concern for cleaning up dilapidated buildings along Route 40 within our council boundaries was raised by the Vice Chairman and the Chairman made a call for all attendees to make note of such locations and submit them to the council members to be researched and turned over to the Enterprise Committee for possible incentive to property owners to sell or remediate the property. A concern was raised that there is currently no public transportation from Bel Air to either Edgewood area or Aberdeen area gates at Aberdeen Proving Ground and a suggestion to include that aspect of quality of life issues by the Harford County government.

Two citizens raised specific concerns: one regarded water and sewage problems at Otter Point and FEMA re-designating a flood zone at a residence in West Shore Community which dramatically increased flood insurance for the homeowner. Both issues were to be followed up with Councilwoman Lisanti after the meeting.

Councilwoman Lisanti asked for volunteers to attend the Budget Advisory Committee public hearings from April 11 – 15 from 3 to 6 pm in the building currently housing the Board of Education.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.